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Reviewing Stand

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

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What Is Happening To Our War Babies?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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Broadcast continuously since 1934 by Northwestern University



THE REVIEWING STAND is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by the stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. THE REVIEWING STAND presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University; Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago.

The Northwestern University Reviewing Stand, published weekly beginning May 2, 1943, by the Offices of the Director of Radio (Public Relations), Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office, Evanston, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1875. Subscription price, \$1.00 for 16 weeks, \$2.00 for 32 weeks, \$2.50 for one year. Single copies, ten cents.

What Is Happening

To Our War Babies?

MR. BORIN: The Reviewing Stand is happy to cooperate with the Chicago Boys' Clubs in presenting this discussion of a most interesting and important social problem.

Mr. Rudolph, you have used the phrase "war babies" in referring to a certain group of American children. Specifically, who are they? Who are the war babies?

MR. RUDOLPH: These children are those who are living in made-over apartments, using common kitchens and bathrooms. They are also the children of war veterans, of divorced homes, of deceased veterans.

MISS TAYLOR: We could also include a good many other children who have lived under the stress of migrant homes, of poor housing and war conditions, but perhaps whose family life was partially normal.

MR. BORIN: Are we talking about American children now, or are we including European children, all victims of the war?

American Children

MR. GIST: It is my understanding that we are particularly interested in American children.

MR. RUDOLPH: I think also we are interested primarily in the youngsters from the crowded sections of our metropolitan cities.

MR. BORIN: Are we including the children born before the war?

MR. CONDON: It seems to me that the impact of the war made itself felt long before Pearl Harbor. The great increase in so-called war marriages started with the draft in 1939. I think, Dr. Gist, you will find that the marriage and birth rates were as heavy in the early days of the war as they were at the time of Pearl Harbor.

MR. GIST: That is right. Shortly af-

ter 1935 the birth rate began to increase and by 1938 or 1939 it was relatively high. So we are not speaking strictly of war babies because a large number of children who were born before the war actually experienced many of the same difficulties the war babies experienced.

MR. BORIN: We are talking about the total baby population between the years 1940 and 1946, not just those orphaned by the war.

MR. GIST: That is right.

MR. BORIN: Now that we have identified the war babies, can we determine in any way how many there are?

MR. GIST: Well, normally, we would expect about 15 or 18 million children born between 1940 and 1946. I would say "normally" because there is no objective way of determining what was the normal birth rate, but if we start with the average birth rate between 1938 and 1940 there would have been about 18 million children born during this six-year period. That includes, of course, the excess number who were born partly as a result of wartime conditions, or at least under wartime conditions.

MISS TAYLOR: It is interesting to note that in Chicago alone there are 500,000 children under ten years of age at the present time. And it is also very interesting to note that 20 per cent of these are living under very inadequate housing and home conditions.

'Three Million Excess'

MR. GIST: I think in general we can say that 3 million babies over and above what might be considered the normal number were born during this period.

MR. BORIN: This bulge in our population, the "excess babies," as you call them, are those the war babies?

MR. GIST: Most of them are war babies; some of them have been born since the war, since 1945.

I would like to draw a picture, figuratively speaking. If we could think in terms of a pyramid with the population at the bottom of the pyramid as a bulge, representing a fairly large percentage of the total number of people in the whole population structure, and realize that during war time conditions the birth rate is high so as to make a rather pronounced bulge at the base of the pyramid, that would show us what we have at the present time.

MR. BORIN: Do you agree with that, Mr. Condon?

MR. CONDON: I don't think it is a matter for agreement. I think that is where they are. It is a matter of living with the situation. I do think they are all war babies.

Factor of War

MR. BORIN: We've identified the war babies and we know something about their numbers. Before we discuss their social importance I would like to ask, how did the war affect these children? In other words, why did the war environment create a generation of war babies?

MISS TAYLOR: In many instances the home was not a normal home. The father was out of the home; the mother had to work in order to support the family or because she was needed in war industries. There was constantly a very great emotional strain on the family. Many were migrant and shifting from one place to another and a great many lived in inadequate housing.

MR. GIST: Another aspect of the problem was the shifting of the family from one community or locality to another. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands of families moved during this period, moved from the farm and the villages into the cities and large industrial centers where the parents, or at least one parent could find employment. That meant a new neighborhood, new living conditions, and

playmates and new teachers and new school conditions for children who were in these families during this migration period.

MR. BORIN: To move back to what Miss Taylor said a moment ago. She talked about mothers working and about fathers who were away from the home. What kind of a home did this make for children?

MISS TAYLOR: I think we have to recognize that there were many children in fairly good homes who could be taken care of because of adequate incomes. But speaking for the children who were suffering during that war period, we have seen many instances of children with the door key strung around their neck and access to a home with no supervision during the hours that the mother was out of the home.

We have seen children on door steps of social agencies who were locked out of the house because the family did not want them to have access to the home when they were away. This was especially evident during the war. Then there is the nine-year-old who is put in charge of the younger children. And there is the double shift family which we find to be quite a serious situation. Here the father sleeps during the day and for that reason the child is under a great handicap.

'A War Baby'

MR. BORIN: Mr. Rudolph, you have been acquainted with children under these circumstances. Would you tell us about one of them?

MR. RUDOLPH: I can tell you the story of little Robert. He is one of the most vicious and violent youngsters who ever came to our clubs, one of these active boys who jumped on other children. He stole, he lied; in fact, he ran absolutely wild. And in school he wouldn't even sit still five minutes.

The story, of course, began with the war. The mother had to go to work to help support the home while the father was in service, and since the mother worked regular hours as a waitress the boy had little super-

vision, and lived in a hotel room. Being an active youngster he was knocked around by everyone.

We got together with the principal of the school and the psychologist, and we found out first that while the boy was only eight years of age he had the mental age of eleven years two months and had an I.Q. of 140.

MR. BORIN: Is that a high I.Q.?

MR. RUDOLPH: Yes, I would say so. I wish I had it. [Laughter]

MR. BORIN: You have mentioned the fact that mothers were sometimes out of the home and the fathers were away from home during the war. I wonder about the housing situation. Is that a part of this picture, Mr. Gist?

Housing Problem

MR. GIST: The housing problem has always been in existence in this country but the problem certainly was accentuated during the war, for two reasons or in two ways: One, because of the increased marriages and increased birth rate; second, because of the very great shifting of families from certain areas into other areas of marked congestion. Those areas, of course, were for the most part industrial cities where the parents found employment. Now, many of these families lived under very adverse conditions, in slum tenements, and many of them lived, and are still living, in trailers and other places that are really unfit for human habitation.

MR. CONDON: There is another factor that made the housing problem acute. There was a period of about six years during the war, because of the war machines and because of the difficulty in getting material, when we were not able to take care of the housing problem. We were facing a greatly expanded population and were not even able to take care of the normal housing need.

MR. BORIN: Let's not talk too much about housing because that will be the subject on the Reviewing Stand for the next two weeks.

MISS TAYLOR: I was only going to say

that the present building program is serving the very high income family and very little is being done for the low income families.

MR. BORIN: We are not solving the war baby problem in so far as housing is concerned. Is that right?

MISS TAYLOR: The effect of it upon the child is a very serious problem today.

MR. BORIN: That is interesting. Why is inadequate housing hard on the children?

MISS TAYLOR: If a family is living in one room, or perhaps two, with the mother and three or four children sharing a community kitchen, sharing a common toilet with three other families, I don't think you can expect the children to come out of those circumstances with very normal reactions and emotional balance. It seems to me we have to think back into that situation and see what we can do about it, as well as attempt to work with the child himself.

MR. BORIN: But haven't we always had these problems in urban areas?

Crowded Living

MISS TAYLOR: Not nearly as much because, as Mr. Condon mentioned, there was no building during these years.

MR. GIST: I was going to add to what Miss Taylor said about the problem. There is a doubling up of families, where two or more families lived under conditions that were suitable only for one family. That occurred all over the country but particularly in the large cities.

MISS TAYLOR: That meant older and younger families were trying to live together and the children were caught in between.

MR. BORIN: We talked about increased marriages and increased birth rates during this period. Did the divorce rate also increase, Mr. Gist?

MR. GIST: That is somewhat outside of my field. But I am under the impression that the divorce rate has gone up considerably since the war.

Many of the marriages have proved to be unstable, or at least not successful, so there is a rising rate of divorces which will turn down somewhat as the family becomes stabilized.

MR. RUDOLPH: It is unfortunate that in one area in which we have a club, at the present time, according to our records, the divorce rate is 50 per cent.

MR. BORIN: In other words, one out of every two marriages goes on the rocks?

MR. RUDOLPH: In this particular area, yes. That may not be true for the country as a whole.

MR. BORIN: There seems to be little doubt that we have a group of American children we can call "war babies." Where are these children now?

MR. CONDON: They are all over, but they are concentrated in the larger cities where our population is concentrated.

MR. BORIN: What age group are they in our population?

MR. CONDON: The great majority fall in the age range of from about six to ten years of age which means that they are now somewhere between the kindergarten and the fourth grade in our school system.

Psychological Problem

MR. BORIN: It is obvious that the child, as Mr. Rudolph describes him, faces some very real psychological problems. Are they causing problems at home?

MR. RUDOLPH: Of course, they are causing trouble at home. It is only natural for a mother who is trying to clean house or cook a meal with two or three children under her feet all the time to tell the children to go out. And going out in this particular case means going out on the street and endangering their health and their physical being.

MR. BORIN: What about their relations with other children? Are they having trouble on the playground and in the school?

MR. RUDOLPH: Yes. We find that the children . . .

MR. BORIN: When you say "we" you mean the Chicago Boys' Club?

MR. RUDOLPH: All the agencies that participate in this work find this problem. These youngsters are uncontrollable because of the lack of discipline—because there is no father to help guide them and a mother who is either too busy at home or who does not properly supervise them. And when agencies do take them over—and they function after school—they get them together and find it very difficult to get their attention for any length of time. And when they do get their attention they have to get them together in small groups. We discovered that if they lose when playing games they begin either to cry or stamp their feet in a tantrum. It is a very serious problem.

MISS TAYLOR: I think we are learning more and more what can be done with children of this age group. Certainly the opportunity is there to give them some of the real resources for the life that lies ahead, the opportunity to develop leadership, to learn to live with others and to live with others who are a little different from the children who happen to have family connections, or those who have normal homes.

City Life

MR. RUDOLPH: We think a great deal of this trouble is caused by the fact that we have deprived them of the things which the country has to give. In other words, they have been required to live in the cities where there is none of the good earth—nothing green—and there are so many of the natural things that are lacking. It seems to me that there is some relationship between the soil and the soul.

MR. GIST: I should like to ask Miss Taylor and Mr. Rudolph, if they noticed any apparent increase in psychological maladjustments, neuroses among children of this age group in their work in the Chicago area?

MISS TAYLOR: I think there is a considerable amount of high tension among young children. We find it particularly in the children who come from these very crowded homes. They desire to run, to be disorganized, and to seek adventure in life. That has always been the case, but I think the tension in the home is reflected in the child, especially in areas where there is a serious tension in the whole community.

MR. RUDOLPH: I know we are very much concerned about the actual delinquent act of these youngsters. We are accustomed—and we know the police department has been accustomed—not to pay attention to these youngsters until they have gotten into trouble. We have found the first delinquent act is committed when the boy is nine years old, but we find that delinquency starts long before that time. The police department and the schools have become aware of that.

Effect on School Systems

MR. BORIN: I think you are indicating that these children, in addition to being problems to themselves, are creating definite problems for society. We know that most of these children are now in the first, second, third and fourth grades. Are they causing any problems in so far as our school systems are concerned?

MR. CONDON: Well, from the standpoint of overcrowding, they are causing problems. You find the same difficulty in adjusting children who come from these backgrounds to the community life of the classroom as you find in a club or any other facility. What the extent of that problem will be we are not in a position to know now, but it is growing of course.

MR. GIST: One phase of that problem is the shortage of teachers in this lower age level, particularly kindergarten and elementary school teachers. There is a great shortage all over the country.

MISS TAYLOR: There is also a shortage of classrooms which is very obvious in many of our big cities.

MR. BORIN: Can you tell us anything about that situation here in Chicago, Miss Taylor?

MISS TAYLOR: I am told by the Board of Education that there is one school with 337 children of kindergarten age registered, and fourteen schools in which there are 200 children of kindergarten age registered. That is going to move right through the school and the shortage is going to be very acute.

MR. RUDOLPH: Our chief concern in this situation is that the schools are on two shifts and the child is only in school for two or three hours.

MR. BORIN: When you talk about two shifts, what do you mean?

MR. RUDOLPH: One of the devices they use to meet the overcrowded situation is to have two shifts, a morning shift and an afternoon shift. What is happening to those youngsters during all those hours when they are not going to school?

Effect on Labor Market

MR. GIST: Between 1955 and 1960 the crest of the wave is going to hit the high schools, and while there may not be a shortage of high school teachers there has been an acute shortage of rooms and other facilities. Then, four years beyond that the wave is going to hit the colleges and the labor market. That is going to be a real problem. Mr. Condon is qualified to speak on that.

MR. CONDON: We don't know what is going to happen in the economic conditions of the country, whether these people will be absorbable and whether or not they will be absorbed in a prosperous economy. It is a situation that will have to be met when we face it.

MR. BORIN: Will the fact that these children are going to school under crowded conditions and living under situations that create nervous anxiety reflect in our delinquency rate?

MR. RUDOLPH: We see it very definitely. We don't take them to the police. We try to counsel with their parents and work with the school to meet their problems, but the law, as we said be-

fore, apprehends them around the age of fourteen.

But there is another group of older boys in the community, from the age of 14 to 17, that were also raised during this period when their fathers were away. They are the delinquents of today. And, unfortunately, these little fellows consider the older boys, who even carry guns and knives, as their heroes and they are imitating them as best they can.

MR. GIST: Mr. Rudolph, isn't it true that the vast majority of these youngsters are not going to become delinquent but instead will become pretty good citizens?

MR. RUDOLPH: Most of them will, thank God! Ninety-five per cent of them will become good citizens.

MR. BORIN: Mr. Condon, do you see any evidence of delinquency in this age group?

Delinquency

MR. CONDON: No. I only see that they were born and are being raised in circumstances where delinquency is most likely to flower.

MR. BORIN: You are thinking about urban rather than rural areas?

MR. CONDON: I think it is essentially an urban problem. Again we go back to this inevitable housing and the concentration of population. Outside of those areas, where migrant farm families follow the crops as they ripen across the country, it isn't nearly as serious a problem in the rural areas as it is in the centers of congestion. In the first place, there is no problem of excess population on the land. Nor do you find in the country the presence of any of the factors that so aggravate the situation in the cities. There is no problem of mothers leaving home for work. The farm mother's workshop is her home. The rural schools generally are not overcrowded. Because of lack of crowding, more room, natural recreational facilities, better food, and the other advantages that accompany farm living, the problem of general health is virtually eliminated.

Broadly speaking, I would say there is no real problem in this connection in the rural areas.

MR. GIST: I would like to raise a question about what Mr. Condon said concerning the rural school. I think a good many rural schools are overcrowded. I know in the southeast section of the state of Missouri it is crowded in the rural school, and in the one-room school it is quite pronounced. There has been an excess of babies among the rural population too.

MR. CONDON: I don't think it is generally so in the school system in the rural area but I wouldn't like to generalize. It may be true of some rural areas.

MR. RUDOLPH: I think you would enjoy hearing about a particular case of a youngster, an exceptional boy in this case. We were planning to have a picture taken of this youngster with the governor of our state. He was brought along merely because he happened to be in the principal's office at the time. He had his picture taken as he sat on the governor's lap. The governor said, "He is a fine looking boy." In fact, the governor said he would have liked to have the boy. I said, "Governor, you can have him." [Laughter] Then as this youngster was walking out a knife fell out of his pocket and when we searched him further we found three empty pocketbooks. We don't know where he got them but he has a ready answer for these things. He is a boy who has great potential good or great potential evil. While 95 per cent of our boys are normal, boys like this do concern us.

What Can Be Done?

MR. BORIN: The more you people discuss the problems created for society by the war babies, the greater those problems seem to loom. Before they reach discouraging proportions I should like to ask, what is being done and what can be done to take care of the war babies?

MISS TAYLOR: I would like particularly to stress the responsibility of the community to the child. We men-

tioned housing so I won't go into that, but I wonder whether we are really doing all we can to get adequate schooling. If we need the school rooms now we must work for them. If we need to have children in good health we have to see that there is a stabilized income. And also, we very greatly need to provide the kind of group experience that will help the child to develop his own capacities.

Further, I would like to say that we might open our public schools as community centers and as nursery schools and for other uses in areas where other agencies do not exist.

MR. RUDOLPH: I think too that we should stop studying this problem and do something about it because these youngsters, our future citizens, are getting older and more set in their ways. We should join, as Miss Taylor suggested, with the schools and the churches and parents in providing programs that will captivate and hold their interest. That is the function of an organization such as ours. We all know that youngsters live in a world of make-believe. They worship heroes, so the key to the success of our program is to see to it that they have the right kind of heroes. In this case, the right kind of trained leaders who aren't satisfied with simply entertaining these boys and girls, but will guide their energies and talents so that they will mingle naturally with their fellows, engage in constructive activities of their own choosing, in which they are permitted to work at their own pace, and where they will receive recognition for their accomplishments. This is a serious problem and the manner in which we handle it will profoundly affect us for several generations to come.

Substitute Facilities

MR. CONDON: There seems to be general agreement on what needs to be done. Certainly, if the chance to play and run and blow off steam—the natural birthright of every normal child—is not provided in the home surroundings, then it must be made available elsewhere. There are a number of

agencies that can make available these facilities, but the ones I know most about are the clubs and camps of the Chicago Boys Clubs.

The value of this service can be expressed in no better terms than to quote from a statement recently made by Lt. William Szarat, Director of the Youth Bureau, Chicago Park District Police:

"I recently studied 8,000 case histories of socially maladjusted youth who committed every crime from murder down. It was really amazing to learn that of all the 8,000 studied not one youngster who was actively participating in Boys Club activities had ever committed an offense or come to the attention of the Youth Bureau."

I am happy to see that a great many business leaders have come to realize that this is a problem and have come to recognize that it can be solved, this "bargain" in young human beings, and that they are currently engaged in a determined program to make this typically American plan of assistance available to increasing numbers of our boys and girls who need it.

Low Income Housing

MR. GIST: I would like to suggest that a long-range program of low rent public housing be carried out so that by 1960 the great majority, if not all, of the lower-income families will be adequately housed. By relieving housing congestion and providing more suitable home conditions, we will be contributing greatly to the welfare of the oncoming generation who are now our war babies.

Supplementing such a housing program would be more systematic community planning, which would include, among other things, adequate facilities for recreation for young and middle-aged and old, for their welfare is a common problem.

MR. BORIN: Miss Taylor and gentlemen, you have told us a story about an important segment of our population—the six to ten year olds—the "war babies" as you have titled them.



Suggested Readings

Compiled by Barbara Wynn, Assistant,
Reference Department, Deering
Library, Northwestern University



BANAY, RALPH STEVEN. *Youth in Despair*. New York, Coward-McCann, 1948.

A popular study of juvenile delinquency from causation to prevention.

BETTELHEIM, BRUNO. *Love Is Not Enough; the Treatment of Emotionally Disturbed Children*. Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1950.

Methods used at the University of Chicago's Sovia Shankman Orthogenic School to help delinquent neurotic children to adjust to the world.

BURLINGHAM, DOROTHY TIFFANY, AND FREUD, ANNA. *Infants without Families; The Case For and Against Residential Nurseries*. International University Press, 1944.

A discussion of the development of young children, and the role of the nursery school in taking over functions in which the economically limited home is handicapped.

FINE, BENJAMIN. *Our Children Are Cheated; the Crisis in American Education*. New York, Holt, 1947.

Reprint of a series of articles from the *New York Times* on the American educational system.

GESELL, ARNOLD, and others. *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today*. New York, Harper's, 1943.

"A realistic discussion of the specific techniques for child guidance."

GOLDBERG, HARRIET LABE. *Child Offenders, a Study in Diagnosis and Treatment*. New York, Greene and Stratton, 1948.

A good introduction to and practical guide in the field of juvenile delinquency.

STREET, ROY FRINK. *Children in a World of Conflict*. Boston, Christopher, 1941.

An examination of the ways in which children respond to hostile and confusing environments.

TAPPAN, PAUL WILBUR. *Juvenile Delinquency*. New York, McGraw, 1949.

Up-to-date thinking about practices to combat juvenile delinquency.

American Magazine 139:24, My., '45. "Give the War Babies a Break." V. PACKARD.

Describes the special difficulties encountered by the war babies, including the absence of parents, working mothers, lack of affection, etc.

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 265:101-7, S., '49. "Education of the Young Child." W. C. OLSON.

Points out the consequences of America's "record crop of young children."

Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 26:1-178, Ja., '49. "Juvenile Delinquency." ED. T. SELLIN.

Includes "The Family and Juvenile Delinquency," by H. M. SHULMAN, and "Statistics of Juvenile Delinquency in the United States," by E. E. SCHWARTZ.

Educational Leadership 6:491-5, My., '49. "For Today's Children and Tomorrow's Adults." M. ROSS.

A discussion of the fundamental needs of children.

Educational Leadership 4:188-92, D., '46. "War Babies Are Coming to School." J. L. HYMES, JR.

Evaluates the emotional damage done to the war babies, and pleads for sensitive and understanding teaching methods in dealing with them.

Elementary School Journal 49:425-6, Ap., '49. "Here Come More Kids." W. M. SHANNER.

A "forecast of elementary school enrollment by 1957."

Harper's 190:393-9, Ap., '45. "What's the Matter with the Family"? M. MEAD. A description of the war marriage and its consequences.

Journal of the American Association of University Women 39:77-80, Ja., '46. "Community Planning for Children." L. K. FRANK.

Points out the obligation which every community has to the war babies.

Ladies' Home Journal 62:162-3, N., '45. "Child's Right to Emotional Security." M. A. RIBBLE.

Stresses the importance of a "warm, consistent environment" for a child's maturation.

Ladies' Home Journal 64:207, My., '47. "Peace, It's a Problem." M. DALY. Case history of a war marriage.

National Education Association Journal 37:573-4, D., '48. "Maybe They Won't Believe It But It's True!" T. M. STINNETT.

Describes the effect on our schools of the "greatest tidal wave in the history of American education."

New Republic 116:17-20, Mr. 24, '47. "One Out of Three Breaks Up." W. K. REED, JR.

Tells why the G. I. marriages have flooded the divorce courts.

New York Times Magazine p. 22, Ap. 20, '47. "Plotting the Future of the War Babies." L. K. FRANK and M. FRANK.

Emphasizes the special care needed by children born during the war years.

New York Times Magazine p. 18, F. 3, '46. "Whys of War Divorce." J. DANIEL. Same abridged. *Science Digest* 19:7-10, Ap., '46.

Six basic reasons for disaster.

Parent's Magazine 21:194, S., '46. "Child of Divorce." J. D. KIRKPATRICK. Discusses the problems faced by children of divorced parents.

Parent's Magazine 23:40, S., '48. "Our Desperate Need for More Schools." G. J. HECHT.

Describes the alarming school situation caused by the great increase in the birth rate.

Parent's Magazine 25:21, Ja., '50. "What Children May Hope for From Congress." K. M. FAHY.

Discusses possible legislation to improve the health and education of the nation's children.

Parent's Magazine 21:14, Ag., '46. "War Babies Need Help." L. K. FRANK. Describes the maladjustment experienced by the war babies and suggests remedies.

Survey 83:41-52, F., '47. "Beneath the Surface of Juvenile Delinquency and Child Neglect." R. ROBINSON.

Includes a discussion of the causes of family disorganization.

Survey 80:198-9, Jl., '44. "Children of War Marriages." A. L. RAUTMAN.

Describes the hazards faced by children born into those unstable families which are legal units but not psychological units.

Woman's Home Companion 76:36, Mr., '49. "Isn't It Your Fault Too?" V. SWARTSFAGER.

A discussion of delinquent parents.



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13. Are We Losing the Cold War in Asia?
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